



Excerpt from *Coaches' Guide to Team Policies*

ASEP

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SELECTING TEAM POLICIES FOR PARENTS

Parents can be your greatest allies; they help your team in many ways: encouraging their children, paying their children's expenses, providing transportation, organizing awards functions, fund-raising, and serving as fans, assistant coaches, or managers. Their attitudes toward sport, both positive and negative, can make a big difference to team cooperation, spirit, and discipline.

Think about the parents of some of the athletes you have coached and how their attitudes and willingness (or lack thereof) to help affected your athletes and team. Can you recall a parent whose optimism or encouraging words persuaded a discouraged athlete to keep trying despite setbacks? How many of your athletes' parents regularly volunteer for demanding but unrewarded roles such as laundering uniforms, transporting athletes to tournaments, assembling team records, keeping score in games, or soliciting sponsorship?

Most parents are cooperative and have balanced and a positive attitude toward sport, but the occasional disruptive or abusive parent (sometimes called the "ugly parent") focuses attention on the inappropriate behavior of a few. You can probably recall parents who questioned



your team selection criteria or felt compelled to share their ideas about team strategy, or whose overeager commentary at games verged on abuse of officials and opponents. How about the parent who seems to take the sport more seriously than his or her child does? Have you ever observed the devastating effect of a parent's negative comment about his or her child's performance? There are even extremes of parental behavior, such as parents from opposing teams who physically fight with each other, sometimes with disastrous consequences, over the outcome of a game.

In selecting your team policies for parents, you might consider the following:

- The age and skill level of your athletes.
- How much time do you want to spend meeting with parents?
- How important is parental input into your team's activities?
- Is there a history of strong parental support or inappropriate parental behavior in your sport or organization?
- Do parents in your school have particular expertise that might be useful?



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SAMPLE CODES OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS

Coach A's Choices

Parental support is important; parents are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's sport activities.

As a parent of a team member, I understand that I am expected to act with honor and dignity at all sporting events and to show self-respect and respect for athletes, coaches, officials, and others involved in sport. I will behave in ways that are consistent with the following values:

Respectfulness

- Act respectfully in both victory and defeat.
- Try to use positive words when discussing my child's performance.
- Respect the coach.
- Speak respectfully about athletes, coaches, and officials in front of my child.
- Avoid using profanity or abusive language or gestures at sport activities.
- Speak to officials or opposing players, coaches, parents, and fans only if needed and with respect.

Responsibility

- Encourage my child to attend school and to maintain academic eligibility.
- Consider whether the coach should be aware of any change in family circumstances that might affect my child's punctuality or attendance at practice or games.
- Encourage my child to take care of the team uniform and equipment.
- Support the coach's decisions on disciplinary action; seek to discuss with the coach any disciplinary action involving my child.

Caring

- Encourage my child to cooperate with teammates in practice and games.
- Encourage my child to lead a healthy lifestyle and to be fit and healthy enough to participate in sport.

Honesty

- Be honest with the coach, the school, medical and support staff, and recruiters.
- Encourage my child to be loyal to the team.

Fairness

- Encourage my child to play fairly within the written rules of the sport.

Good citizenship

- Encourage my child to strive for excellence.
- Support the team's rules on tobacco use and substance abuse.

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Coach B's Choices

Sport is an important part of a young person's development and education. Our team values the development of good character through sport and the principles espoused in the six moral values: respectfulness, responsibility, caring, honesty, fairness, and good citizenship.

As a parent of a team member, I will act with respect and dignity and will demonstrate self-respect and act respectfully at all times toward everyone involved in sport, including athletes, coaches, other parents, support staff, officials, opponents, volunteers, and spectators. I will behave in ways that are consistent with the following values:

Respectfulness

- Show respect to athletes, opponents, officials, and spectators regardless of the outcome of a competition. I will avoid excessive displays of emotion and will teach my child to respect opponents and to pursue victory with honor.
- Listen to my child's views and use positive words when discussing his or her participation in sport. I will avoid using negative words to criticize performance and outcome and will instead praise effort and encourage my child's enjoyment and improvement.
- Speak respectfully about and avoid criticizing athletes, coaches, and officials. I will accept decisions without arguing and support the efforts of coaches, officials, and other athletes.
- Respect the coach and trust his or her decisions about training, game strategy, team selection, and discipline.
- Make an appointment with the coach if I wish to speak with him or her.
- Discuss with the coach only issues relating to my child and recognize that it is inappropriate for me to discuss playing time, team selection, game strategy, training drills, and team members other than my children.
- Not attend practice.
- Use positive words, even when being critical, and avoid using vulgar or offensive language or gestures or aggressive or taunting actions or language at any sport activity.
- Not talk directly to or give instructions to any athlete, including my own child, at any time during a game.
- Not talk directly with officials or opposing players or coaches at any time before, during, or after a game or match.
- Be ejected from practice or games and barred from attending practice or games if I disrupt practice or games by being abusive or using obscene language or gestures.

Responsibility

- Actively support my child's education and encourage him or her to be a student first and to achieve academically. I will support the enforcement of team rules on academic eligibility, including rules on attendance and grades.
- Inform the coach of any change in family circumstances that might affect my child's punctuality or attendance at practices, games, matches, or meets.

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SAMPLE CODES OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS »continued

Coach B's Choices (continued).....

- Share responsibility with my child for caring for the team uniform and equipment and pay the cost of repairing or replacing uniforms or equipment lost or damaged beyond that expected by normal use.
- Actively teach my child to exercise self-control in all sport-related activities; discourage my child from displaying excessive emotion, anger, or physical or verbal aggression; exercise self-control myself when watching competition.
- Accept the coach's decisions on disciplinary action without question.

Caring

- Teach my child to cooperate with teammates, to demonstrate concern for them, and to support them. I will teach my child to put the needs of the team ahead of personal glory.
- Ensure that my child leads a healthy lifestyle, which includes getting enough sleep; eating a healthy diet; allowing time to recover from illness or injury; and avoiding unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and using drugs or banned substances.
- Ensure that my child is medically fit before joining the team; arrange and pay for medical clearance and a physical examination of my child by a medical practitioner, who must certify that my child is medically fit to participate.

Honesty

- Be open and honest with the coach, the school, medical and support staff, and recruiters. I will volunteer relevant information and will not lie or withhold information.
- Teach my child to be loyal to the team and to put the needs of the team ahead of personal glory and goals. I will model this behavior myself.

Fairness

- Actively encourage my child to play by both the written and unwritten rules and within the spirit of the rules. I will encourage my child to avoid bending or knowingly breaking a rule or cheating to gain an advantage and will applaud fair play and excellent performance of all players, including those on the opposing team.

Good citizenship

- Encourage my child to continually improve and strive for excellence. I will focus on and acknowledge my child's efforts, improvement, and outstanding performance regardless of outcome (e.g., winning or losing).
- Support the enforcement of team rules on tobacco use and substance abuse. I will actively discourage my child's use of tobacco and controlled substances and will accept the coach's disciplinary actions in breaches of the team's policies on tobacco and substance abuse.

About the Author



Content provider **Dr. Laurel T. Mackinnon** is a former associate professor, now an adjunct professor, of exercise physiology at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. Dr. Mackinnon is a fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine and was internationally recognized for her research on immune function and overtraining in elite athletes. She has been involved in youth sport for 15 years by coaching and managing her sons' participation in soccer, track and field, and basketball.

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